

11. (Original) The communications system of claim 10, characterized in that it is a multiple access network in which the physical connection (111) between the central unit and the terminals is one of the following: cable, optical fiber, combination of those, satellite link, terrestrial radio link, Local Multipoint Distribution connection, Microwave Multipoint Distribution System connection.

REMARKS

The non-final Office Action dated October 22, 2003 has been received and its contents carefully studied. Reconsideration of the rejections of the claims is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks. Claims 1 and 3-11 are pending. Independent claim 7 is allowed. All of the other claims are rejected.

Applicant notes that, on page two of the Office Action, the first line of paragraph 2 incorrectly says that claim 7 is rejected.

Applicant also notes that a small typographic error is now corrected at line 3 of claim 10. Furthermore, it appears that there has been a typographical error in both claim 6 and 7, which both originally used the word "incapability" and this was subsequently changed to "capability" by mistake. Therefore, claims 6 and 7 are presently amended to correct that error, by changing "capability" back to "incapability."

Independent claims 1, 6, 8, 9, and 10 are rejected as obvious under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) from *Takahashi* (U.S. Patent No. 6,205,148) in view of *Ohanian* (U.S. Patent No. 6,122,287). *Ohanian* was previously relied upon, but *Takahashi* is a new reference.

The Present Independent Claims Should be Allowable

The Office Action acknowledges that *Takahashi* does not disclose the network interface (107), at page 3, line 5 of the Office Action. The Office Action asserts that this feature is disclosed by *Ohanian*. Even assuming that *Ohanian* does disclose an element that is fully

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equivalent to the network interface (107), claim 1 describes interactions involving the network interface (107) that are nowhere taught or suggested by either *Ohanian* or by *Takahashi*.

Claim 1 states that a connection is established between the network interface (107) and the signaling unit (105), and that this connection is established in response to the answer message (202). This connection is entirely within the central unit (101), and it is only established once the answer message is received. Thus, prior to receipt of the answer message, the connection between the network interface (107) and the signaling unit (105) does not exist. This is a useful feature of the present invention because, for example, it allows the signaling unit to not be bothered until the answer is received from the terminal. *Ohanian* does not disclose anything like this, even assuming that *Ohanian* does sufficiently disclose the network interface (107).

The applicant respectfully reiterates that the present claimed invention requires there to be signalling units at the central unit, and it is positively required in the present independent claims that a connection between a signalling unit and the network interface of the central unit is only established after the protocol to be used is known. This feature is completely different from what *Takahashi* has explained, and the other cited references do not fill this gap.

Furthermore, applicant would like to point out that the Office Action has not pointed to anything in the cited references about the answer message indicating the capability or incapability of the terminal to support a protocol if the terminal does not support any of the protocols supported by the central unit. This is an important feature of present claim 6 that is not addressed by the Office Action.

Applicant would also like to respectfully mention the difference between signalling and data. The applicant's invention is about signalling protocols, while *Takahashi* is directed toward selecting the correct protocol for transmitting a data packet, i.e. in data transmission protocols. This is a significant difference which serves to further distinguish *Takahashi* from all of the present independent claims. Applicant also notes that the *Takahashi* patent discusses the problems of correctly transferring packets between routers, and therefore *Takahashi* is not

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very pertinent to any of the applicant's independent claims, because a router is a very different structure as compared to a terminal.

Conclusion

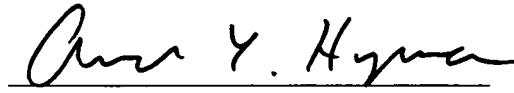
Applicants respectfully submit that the amended claims of the present application define patentable subject matter and are patentably distinguishable over the cited references for the reasons explained. The rejections of the Official Action of October 22, 2003 having been shown to be inapplicable, retraction thereof is requested, and early passage of all the pending claims to issue is earnestly solicited.

Applicant would appreciate if the Examiner would please contact Applicant's attorney by telephone, if that might help to speedily dispose of any unresolved issues pertaining to the present application.

Respectfully submitted,

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